



FACULTEIT DER GEESTESWETENSCHAPPEN  
*Afdeling Kunst-, Religie- en Cultuurwetenschappen*

**HISTORY OF HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY  
AND RELATED CURRENTS**

**REPORT 2013**



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## **1. Introduction**

An important event for the GHF (HHP) program this year was Egil Aspren's PhD dissertation defense on February 5, which was awarded a *cum laude* (the highest possibility in the Dutch system). His dissertation, *The Problem of Enchantment*, was accepted for publication by Brill Academic Publishers and is expected to appear in print in 2014. Aspren was exceptionally successful in his applications for Postdoctoral funding by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NOW): he was awarded a *Veni* as well as a *Rubicon* scholarship. After due consideration he decided to accept the *Rubicon*, which allows him to spend two years of postdoc research at the University of Santa Barbara, USA, where he is now working in a research group focused on religion and consciousness studies headed by Prof. Ann Taves. Between the end of his PhD appointment and the beginning of his postdoc position on September 1, short-term financing by the Foundation HHP and the Faculty of Humanities of the UvA made it possible for Aspren to take responsibility for building the Center's new website. The website makes optimal use of state-of-the art technology for modern design and connecting with social media, and should significantly enhance HHP's online visibility and attractiveness for prospective students.

The previous Report mentioned some worries about the decline in student numbers over the past few years, particularly international students. Fortunately, this trend would seem to have been temporary: starting with the academic year 2013-2014, the student numbers have increased considerably, and the number of applications for 2014-2015 looks very good as well. Most plausibly this change may be attributed to a combination of increasing optimism regarding the international economy and the impact of the new website.

## **2. Personnel**

As of January 2013, the position of Secretary has been taken over by Ms. Nadine Faber.

## **2. Teaching: Program and Levels of Participation**



2nd semester 2012-2013

Bachelor

Hermetica II: Westerse Esoterie in de Oudheid en de Middeleeuwen (D. Waarsenburg). 10 students

Hermetica IV: Westerse Esoterie sinds de Verlichting (M. Pasi). 13 students

Master

Occult Trajectories II: Secret Societies and Conspiracy Theories (M. Pasi), 4 students

1st semester 2013-2014

Bachelor

Westerse Esoterie en Religieus Pluralisme (W.J. Hanegraaff). 32 students

Westerse esoterie in de vroeg-moderne periode (P.J. Forshaw & M.A. Zuber). 12 students

Master

Contested Knowledge II: Cosmotheism and Disenchantment (W.J. Hanegraaff). 13 students

Renaissance Esotericism II: Occult Philosophies (P.J. Forshaw). 16 students

Other teaching

Bachelor

Onderzoeksvaardigheden Religiestudies: Excursion to Rome, 18-24 January, 2013 (P.J. Forshaw). 4 students.

Master

rMA Core Module Methods and Theory in the Study of Religion (M. Pasi, coord.). 6 students

rMA Core Module Polemics on Religion and the Politics of Religious Identity (W.J. Hanegraaff, M. Colominas Aparicio & J.C. Greer). 5 students.



## 4. Research

### 4.1. Research Program

No new projects.

### 4.2. Research Output.

#### Egil Asprem

*The Problem of Disenchantment: Scientific Naturalism and Esoteric Discourse, 1900-1939.*  
Ph.D. dissertation, Faculty of Humanities, University of Amsterdam.

(ed., with Kennet Granholm), *Contemporary Esotericism*, Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

(with Asbjørn Dyrendal) "Sorte brorskap, mørke korrespondanser og frelsende avsløringer. Konspirasjonsteori som esoterisk diskurs," *Din: Tidsskrift for religion og kultur* 1 (2013).

(with Kennet Granholm) "Introduction," in: Asprem & Granholm, *Contemporary Esotericism*, Sheffield: Equinox, 1-24.

(with Kennet Granholm) "Constructing Esotericisms: Sociological, Historical, and Critical Approaches to the Invention of Tradition," in: Asprem & Granholm, *Contemporary Esotericism*, Sheffield: Equinox, 25-48.

"Psychic Enchantments of the Educated Classes: The Paranormal and the Ambiguities of Disenchantment," in: Asprem & Granholm, *Contemporary Esotericism*, Sheffield: Equinox, 330-350.

"Theosophical Attitudes towards Science: Past and Present," in: Olav Hammer & Mikael Rothstein (eds.), *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, Leiden: Brill, 405-428.

"Sjamanismens genealogi." *Humanist* 2 (2013).

"Roboter i nirvana," *Humanist* 4 (2013).

"The Prophet of Silicon Valley," *MercatorNet*, 6 October 2013. URL:

[http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/the\\_magus\\_of\\_silicon\\_valley](http://www.mercatornet.com/articles/view/the_magus_of_silicon_valley)

#### Peter J. Forshaw

"'Chemistry, that Starry Science': Early Modern Conjunctions of Astrology and Alchemy," in: L. Greene & N. Campion (eds.), *Sky and Symbol*, Lampeter: Sophia Centre Press, 143-184.

"Cabala Chymica or Chemia Cabalistica: Early Modern Alchemists and Cabala," *Ambix* 60:4, 361-389.

Review of: Lawrence M. Principe, *The Secrets of Alchemy*. *Renaissance Quarterly* 66:3, 1005-1007.

#### J. Christian Greer



"Occult Origins: Hakim Bey's Ontological Anarchism," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 2, 2013.

### Wouter J. Hanegraaff

*Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, London: Bloomsbury.

"Hermetism," in: K. Pollmann (ed.), *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1135-1139.

"The Notion of 'Occult Sciences' in the Wake of the Enlightenment," in: M. Neugebauer-Wölk, R. Geffarth & M. Meumann (eds.), *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Wege in die Moderne* (Hallesche Beiträge zur Europäischen Aufklärung), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 93-95.

"Jan Assmann," in: R. Celikates, R. Gabriels, J.F. Hartle, P. Lemmens & T. Lijster (eds.), *De nieuwe Duitse filosofie: Denkers en thema's voor de 21e eeuw*, Amsterdam: Boom, 480-486.

"Textbooks and Introductions to Western Esotericism," *Religion* 43:2, 178-200.

"The Power of Ideas: Esotericism, Historicism, and the Limits of Discourse," *Religion* 43:2, 252-273.

"Мрії про теологію та реальність християнства," *Filosofs'ka Dumka* 3, 92-116.

Review of Nadya Chishty-Mujahid, *An Introduction to Western Esotericism: Essays in the Hidden Meaning of Literature, Groups, and Games*. *Nova Religio: Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 16:3, 125-126.

"Geven in plaats van verkopen," in: J. Baijens (ed.), *Het beste idee van 2013*, Tilburg: De Wereld, 170-171.

### Marco Pasi

"L'art contemporain et la mode de l'occulte," in: L. Roussillon-Constanty & Ph. Murillo (eds.), *Science, Fables and Chimera: Cultural Encounters*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 121-132.

"The Problems of Rejected Knowledge: Thoughts on Wouter Hanegraaff's *Esotericism and the Academy*," *Religion* 43:2, 201-212.

"Theosophy and Anthroposophy in Italy during the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Theosophical History* 16:2, 81-119.

"Оккультизм и современность: Некоторые ключевые моменты," *Государство Религия Церковь в России и за Рубежом* 31:4, 276-296.

"La magia nella cultura occidentale: tra disincanto, modernità e arte," in: G. Maraniello & W. Guadagnini (eds.), *La grande magia: Opere scelte dalla collezione UniCredit*, Bologna: MAMbo, 153-162.

"Magic in Western Culture: Disenchantment, Modernity and Art," in: G. Maraniello & W. Guadagnini (eds.), *La grande magia: Opere scelte dalla collezione UniCredit*, Bologna: MAMbo, 163-171.

"Aleister Crowley, Painting, and the Works from the Palermo Collection," *Abraxas* 3, 65-77.

(with L. Porsager), "Ablaze with the Fires of Matter: A Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Conversation between Marco Pasi and Lea Porsager about her Two Weirdly Related Works: Anatta Experiment (2012) and How to Program and Use T-F



(2013),” in: S.B. Brøgger (ed.), *Ablaze with the Fires of Matter*, Copenhagen: Officin, 3-11.

“The Name of the Nose,” in: C. Squitieri & S. Takahashi (eds.), *OuUnPo[RT0]. Ouvroir d’Univers Potentiels Vol. 9*, London: Dent-de-Leone, 178-183.

“Een allesomvattende ervaring van de wereld,” *Het Parool*, 4 May, 34.

### Mike A. Zuber

Review of Allison P. Coudert, *Religion, Magic, and Science in Early Modern Europe and America*. *Preternature* 2:1, 100–105.

Translation of Mordechai Kremnitzer, “Der Holocaust in Recht und Literatur,” in: Andreas B. Kilcher, Matthias Mahlmann & Daniel Müller-Nielaba (eds.), *“Fechtschulen Und Phantastische Gärten”*: *Recht Und Literatur*, Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag, 57–74.

## **5. Public Activities**

### Egil Aspren

#### Lectures

“Scientific Rationalism, Occult Empiricism? Representations of the microphysical world, c. 1900”. Invited Lecture, Conference *Looking Through the Occult: Instrumentation, Esotericism, and Epistemology in the 19th Century*, Humboldt University Berlin, November 14-16.

“2045: Rapture of the Nerds! Om den transhumanistiske apokalypsen og det nye New Age”. Invited Public Lecture, *Forum Nidarosiae*, Trondheim, Norway, September 12.

“A Nihilist’s View of Scientific Meaning-Making: Analytical Approaches to Synthesizing Minds”. Invited Keynote Lecture, *Synthesis – Esotericism & Science*, Junior Scholars Conference, University of Amsterdam, April 29, 2013.

“The Magus of Silicon Valley: Ray Kurzweil’s Transhumanism as Contemporary Esotericism”. ESSWE4 Gothenburg, Sweden, June 26-29.

### Peter J. Forshaw

#### Lectures

“The Goal of the Wise: Medieval and Renaissance Astral Magic and the Influence of the *Picatrix*”. Keynote Lecture at Conference *Celestial Magic: The Eleventh Annual Sophia Centre Conference*, Bath, 22-23 June 2013.

“‘Medicina Hermetica’: The Early Modern Promotion of a Hermetic Way to Health”, Keynote Lecture at Conference *ESSWE 4: Western Esotericism and Health*, Gothenburg, 26-29 June.

“From Occult Ekphrasis to Magical Art: Transforming Text into Talismanic Image in the *Picatrix*”. Invited Lecture at Conference *Methodical Reflexions about the Relationship*



*between Magical Texts and Images*, Heidelberg, 9 July.

“Sigillum Dei/Aemeth - Seal of God and Truth”. Invited Lecture at Conference *John Dee and the Search for Truth*, London, 9 November.

“Man as a Spiritual Being from a ‘Hermetic’ Perspective”, Bilthoven, 7 December.

#### Webinar

“Infinite Fire Webinar III: John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*”. *Hermetically Open*, in collaboration with the *Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, Amsterdam, 7 February.

#### J. Christian Greer

#### Lectures

“‘The Only Law We Live by is Fuck'um if They Can't Take a Joke’: The Church of the SubGenius’ Mailbomb to Bob Black”. Conference *Lived Religion*, Nederlands Genootschap voor Godsdienstwetenschap (NGG), University of Leiden, Leiden, The Netherlands, Oct. 24-25.

#### Wouter J. Hanegraaff

#### Lectures

“The Role of Gnosis in Western Esotericism”, Opening Keynote Lecture, International Academic Symposium *Ways of Gnosis: Mystical and Esoteric Traditions from Antiquity to the Present Time*, Margarita Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature / Association for the Study of Esotericism and Mysticism (ASEM), Moscow, 10 April.

“Western Esotericism: The Next Generation”, Public Lecture, Gothenburg University, Sweden, 17 April.

“Gnosis en *The Matrix*”, Lecture Dag van de Geesteswetenschappen, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 24 April.

“From Late Antiquity until Today: The History of Occult Ideas in the West and their Reception”, Lecture at Symposium *The Art of Seeing the Invisible: On Hilma af Klint and Other Visionaries*, Ax:son Johnson Foundation, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden, 24 May.

“Presidential Address”, *Western Esotericism and Health*, 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism, Gothenburg, Sweden, 26-28 June.

“Leonora Carrington and the Occult”, Paper at International Conference *Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy and the Arts in the Modern World*, University of Amsterdam, 25-27 September.

“Arthur Edward Waite’s Kabbalah”, Paper at Conference *The Roads Not Taken: Research, Adaptations and Appropriation of Kabbalah in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt a.M., 17-19 November.





Marco Pasi

### Lectures

- “Fernando Pessoa : ésotérisme, sociétés secrètes et théories du complot,” Institut Européen en Sciences des Religions, Paris, Invited lecture for the association “Politica Hermetica,” 13 April.
- “At the Sources of the Rivers of Life: Lady Caithness and the Early History of Occultist Sexual Magi,” University of Gothenburg, 4th biannual conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE): “Western Esotericism and Health”, 29 June.
- “Esotericism, Theosophy, Modernity and Contemporary Art,” Spui25, University of Amsterdam, Symposium *Enchanted modernities. Esotericism, Modernity and the Arts*, 12 September.
- Participation in a round-table at the seminar *Hilma af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*, Engelsberg Manor, Opening of the Hilma af Klint exhibition at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden, 16 February.
- Participation in the ContERN panel discussion *Problems and Potentials in the Study of Contemporary Esotericism*, University of Gothenburg, 4th biannual conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), 28 June,
- Participation in the round table discussion on “Esotericism and the Occult in the University”, Utah State University, Logan, USA,
- Response in the panel “Esotericism and Eroticism in Kabbalah, Tantra, and Western Esoteric Traditions,” Baltimore, Annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), 24 November.
- “The Theosophical Movement and the Construction of Esoteric Ethnic Identities in Italy (1890-1915)”, Conference *Theosophical Appropriations: Kabbalah, Western Esotericism and the Transformation of Traditions*, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva 17 December.
- “Western Esotericism and Modern Artistic Creativity.” Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Symposium *The Art of Seeing the Invisible: On Hilma af Klint and Other Visionaries*”, 25 May.
- “Western Esotericism and the problem of modern artistic creativity”. Symposium *Hilma Af Klint: A Pioneer of Abstraction*, Museo Picasso Málaga, 22 October.
- “Whose Lights Are You On? Esoteric Paradoxes of the Enlightenment”. Symposium on *Radical Enlightenment*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 15 March.
- “‘Natura renovatur’: Giacinto Scelsi’s Music and the Esoteric Milieus of His Time.” University of Amsterdam, Conference *Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy and the Arts in the Modern World*, 27 September.

### Conference Organization

*Enchanted modernities. Esotericism, modernity and the arts*, Study Evening Spui25, Amsterdam, 12 September.



*Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy and the Arts in the Modern World*, University of Amsterdam, 25-27 September.

Mike A. Zuber

Lectures

“Copernicanism and God’s Two Books in Lutheran Germany: The Case of Johann Jacob Zimmermann (1642–93).” *Scientiae: Disciplines of Knowing in the Early Modern World*, University of Warwick, 18-20 April.

“Protestant Unity through Kabbalistic Chymistry: Johann Philipp Maul (1662–1727) and the Healing Waters of Schwelm.” *ESSWE4: Western Esotericism and Health*, University of Gothenburg, 26-29 June.

## 6. Editorial Activities

Peter J. Forshaw

(editor in chief) *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*. Leiden/Boston: Brill

(editorial board) *Ambix: Journal of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry*.

London: Maney

(editorial board) *Universal Reform: Studies in Intellectual History, 1550-1700*,

Aldershot: Ashgate

(editorial board) *Correspondences: Online Journal for the Academic Study of Western Esotericism*

(editorial board) *História Revista*

(advisory board) *Magic, Ritual, & Witchcraft*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Wouter J. Hanegraaff

(editorial board) *Religion*. Elsevier.

(editorial board) *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

(editorial board) *Aries Book Series: Texts and Studies in Western Esotericism*. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

(editorial board) *Religion Compass*, Section “New Religions”.

<http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/religion/>

(advisory board) *Esoterica* <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu>

(advisory board) *Journal of Contemporary Religion*. Carfax

(advisory board) (2008). *Gnostica Series*. London: Equinox Publ.

Marco Pasi

Pasi, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Aries book series*.

(editor) *Aries Book Series: Texts and Studies in Western Esotericism*. Leiden / Boston: Brill.

(editorial board) *Politica Hermetica*.



(editorial board) *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies.*  
(editorial board) *International Journal for the Study of New Religions.*  
(advisory board) *Secretum: Scienze, saperi, forme di cultura.*